

## RAMESES II Delphi - Round 2

### Introduction

**Thank you for continuing to help us with the RAMESES II project.**

**In Round 1 of our Delphi process, we had asked panel members for suggestions of Items to include in the RAMESES II reporting standards realist evaluations. What we hope to produce are reporting standards rather than detailed guidance on how to conduct a realist evaluation. Your comments related to how to conduct realist evaluations have however been captured for later use when we develop our training materials. We hope to make our standards relevant to evaluators, researchers, journal editors, peer-reviewers and funders.**

**We have collated all your responses and compiled a list of potential Items for inclusion in the 'RAMESES II reporting standards for realist evaluations'. In Round 2, we would be grateful if you would please rate each Item for:**

- Relevance (should we include an Item on this theme/topic at all?)**
- Content (should we word this Item like this?)**

**There will be a free text box for you to make comments on any aspect of an Item. To help you understand why an Item has been included we have also provided a brief explanation. We would also appreciate any comments you may have regarding the order the Items have been presented in.**

**This survey will take you between 15 to 30 minutes to complete.**

**You may at any time stop and return to where you left off by clicking on the unique web link you were sent inviting you to take part in this survey. You may also go back to previous items if you wish.**

**We would be most grateful if you would please try to complete the survey by 8th November 2015 at the latest.**

**Please click on the NEXT button below to proceed.**

Item 1: Title

**Item 1: Title**

**In the title, identify the document as a Realist Evaluation.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Our background searching has shown that some realist evaluations are not flagged as such in the title and may also be inconsistently indexed, and hence are more difficult to locate. There are also some evaluations that use a different realist approach (e.g. such as critical realism). Researchers, policy and decision makers and other knowledge users may wish to be able to locate reports using these different realist approaches.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 2: Summary or Abstract

**Item 2: Abstract**

**A summary of abstract should be as informative but brief as possible. At the very least a summary should contain information about the following aspects of a realist evaluation: purpose of the evaluation; setting and participants; description of the overall evaluation strategy; data collection methods used; key findings and; implications of findings. If the evaluation is published in a more formal way the publication outlet (e.g. journal) will often stipulate the format of the abstract. As far as possible taking account of journal-specific formatting and content requirements, the abstract should contain brief details of the study context, evaluation question(s) and/or objective(s); data gathering method(s) used, nature and number of participants, recruitment/sampling approach, data documentation processes, data analysis and synthesis processes; results; and conclusions/implications.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Apart from the title, an abstract is often the only source of information accessible to searchers unless the full paper is obtained. Many busy knowledge users will often not have the time to read an entire evaluation report or publication and only access the summary or abstract. The information in it must allow the reader to decide if the evaluation is a realist evaluation and relevant to their needs.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

## RAMESES II Delphi - Round 2

### Introduction section

**The following Items in this section are topics for consideration in the Introduction section for the RAMESES II publication standards for realist evaluations.**

**Please click on the NEXT button below to proceed.**

Item 3: Rationale for evaluation

**Item 3: Rationale for evaluation**

**Explain why the evaluation was done and the implications of the purpose on the focus and broad design of the evaluation.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Evaluations are conducted for multiple purposes (e.g. to develop a programme theory/logic, assess the process of delivering a programme or the cost of a programme). The purpose has significant implications for the focus of work, the nature of questions, the choice of methodology and the design. In some commissioned evaluations a background section is often expected. Where this is the case, it should: [a] explain what is already known; [b] what the evaluators considered to be the 'knowledge gaps'; [c] why the evaluation was done and; [d] what the implications were of the purpose on the focus and broad design of the evaluation.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 4: Programme theory

**Item 4: Programme theory**

**Describe the programme theory (or theories) that underpin the programme or initiative.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Realist evaluations set out to develop, test and refine realist programme theory (or theories). All programmes or initiatives will (implicitly or explicitly) have a programme theory or theories (which may or may not be realist in nature) and these should be articulated here. As an evaluation progresses, a programme theory that is not realist in nature will need to be developed, and refined so that it becomes a realist programme theory.

Programmes are theories incarnate. Within a realist evaluation, a programme theory (or theories) can serve many functions. One of its functions is to describe and explain (some of) how and why, in the 'real world', a programme 'works', for whom, to what extent and in which contexts. Other functions include focusing an evaluation, identifying questions, and determining what type of data need to be collected and from whom.

As the evaluation progresses, any initial programme theory should be iteratively developed, tested and refined. At the start of an evaluation, any initial programme theory may need additional development. Different processes can be used for developing programme theory in different circumstances, including literature review, programme documentation review, and interviews and/or focus groups with key informants. The processes used to develop the programme theory are usually different from those used later to refine it. The programme theory development processes need to be clearly reported as this may enable judgements to be made on its adequacy, coherence and plausibility. The processes used for programme theory development may be reported here or in Item 14 – Data analysis.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

**Item 5: Evaluation questions, objectives and focus**

**Item 5: Evaluation questions, objectives and focus**

**State the research question(s) and specify the objectives for the evaluation. Define and justify the scope of the evaluation – with particular reference to the roles played by the programme theory.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Realist evaluation questions contains some or all of the elements of ‘What works, how, why, for whom, to what extent and in what circumstances, in what respect?’ and applies realist logic to address the question (see Item 14 – Data analysis). Specifically, realist evaluation questions need to reflect the underlying purpose of realist evaluation – that is to explain (how and why) rather than only describe outcome patterns.

Because a particular evaluation will never be able to address all potential questions or issues, clarification of the scope of the evaluation has to take place. This important process may involve discussion and negotiation with (for example) context experts, funders and/or users. The processes used to establish purposes, scope, questions, and/or objectives should be described. The role of the programme theory in determining the scope of the evaluation should be clearly articulated.

In the real world, the programme being evaluated does not sit in a vacuum. Instead it is thrust into a messy world of pre-existing programmes, a complex policy environment, multiple stakeholders and so on. All of these may have a bearing on (for example) the research questions, focus and constraints of the evaluation. Provide information to the reader of the policy and other circumstances that may have influenced the purposes, scope, questions, and/or objectives of the evaluation.

Given the iterative nature of realist evaluation, if the purposes, scope, questions, objectives, programme theory and/or protocol have changed, it should either be reported here or in Item 17 – Main findings.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 6: Ethics

**Item 6: Ethics**

**State if the realist evaluation has gained ethical approval from the relevant authorities. Provide enough detail to enable independent checks that the evaluation has been conducted in accordance with local regulatory requirements and professional standards. If ethical approval was not needed, explain why.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Realist evaluation is a form of primary research and will usually involve human participants. It is important that evaluations are conducted ethically with relevant and necessary attention to the well-being of the participants. Evaluators come from a range of different professional backgrounds and work in diverse fields. This means that different professional ethical standards and local ethics regulatory requirements are likely to apply. Evaluators should ensure that they are aware of and comply with their professional obligations and local ethics requirements during the evaluation project.

Specifically, a challenge that realist evaluations may face is that as the evaluation evolves legitimate changes may need to be made to the methods used and participants recruited. Anticipating that such changes may be needed is important when seeking ethics approval. Flexibility may need to be built into the project and explained to those who provide ethics approvals.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:



## RAMESES II Delphi - Round 2

### Methods section

**The following questions cover potential Items for inclusion in the Methods section of the RAMESES II reporting standards for realist evaluations**

**Please click on the NEXT button below to proceed.**

### Item 7: Rationale for using realist evaluation

#### Item 7: Rationale for using realist evaluation

**Explain why a realist evaluation approach was used.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Realist evaluation is a theory-driven approach that is firmly rooted in a realist philosophy of science. It places particular emphasis on understanding causation (in this case, understanding how programmes and policies generate outcomes) and how causal mechanisms are shaped and constrained by social, political, economic (and so on) context. This makes it particularly suitable for evaluations of certain topics and questions – for example, complex social programmes that involve human decisions and actions. It also makes realist evaluation less suitable than other evaluation approaches for certain topics and questions – for example those which seek primarily to determine the average effect size of a simpler intervention administered in a limited range of conditions. The most common limitation of published 'realist' evaluations is inadequate engagement with the philosophical principles of the realist approach and the implications these have, firstly, for understanding policies, programmes and initiatives and how they work, and secondly, for cumulating evidence and explanation.

Published evaluations demonstrate that some evaluators have deliberately adapted or been 'inspired' by the approach as first described by Pawson and Tilley. The description and rationale for any adaptations made or what aspects of the evaluations have been 'inspired' by realist evaluation should be provided. Such information will allow criticism, debate and counter criticism amongst evaluators and users on suitability of those adaptations for the particular purposes of the evaluation.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 8: Protocol or evaluation design

**Item 8: Protocol or evaluation design**

**The final protocol or evaluation design (i.e. the account of what was planned) should be reproduced, at least in summary form, in the document which presents the main findings. If this is not done, the omission should be justified and a reference or link to the protocol or evaluation design given. It may also be appropriate to publish or make freely available (e.g. online on a website) the original protocol or evaluation design (e.g. as set out in the commissioned proposal or developed in the early stages of the evaluation).**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

The design for a realist evaluation may differ significantly from other evaluation approaches. As noted above (in Item 4 - Evaluation questions, objectives and focus), the evaluation question(s) and scope (and, by implication, many subsequent steps) of a realist evaluation may evolve over the course of the evaluation. An accessible summary of what was planned in the protocol or evaluation design, in what order, and why is essential for interpreting the evaluation. Comparing the original protocol or evaluation design with the final account of what was done may provide transparency on how the evaluation's processes have evolved in its bid to build understanding of policy, programme or initiative (i.e. the evaluand - that which is being evaluated, such as policies, programmes and initiatives).

Sometimes evaluations can involve a large number of steps and processes. Providing a diagram or figure of the overall structure of the evaluation may help to orient the reader.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 9: Setting(s) of the evaluation

**Item 9: Setting(s) of the evaluation**

**Describe the setting in which the evaluation is taking place.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Explain and describe the setting(s) in which the policy, programme or initiative is being evaluated. These may (for example) include details about the policy landscape, stakeholders, service configuration and availability and funding and so on. Such information enables the reader to make sense of the relevant surrounding complexities and contexts at differing levels (e.g. meso and macro).

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 10: Nature of the programme being evaluated

**Item 10: Nature of the programme being evaluated**

**Describe the nature of the programme being evaluated.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Realist evaluation may be used in a wide range of sectors (e.g. health, education, natural resource management, education, climate change), by a wide range of evaluators and on diverse evaluands. It should not be assumed that the reader will be familiar with the nature of the evaluand. The evaluand should be adequately described: what does it consist of, what is it supposed to achieve, and so on.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 11: Recruitment process and sampling strategy

**Item 11: Recruitment process and sampling strategy**

**Describe and justify the recruitment process of the individuals who were approached to provide information to the realist evaluation that enables theory testing - how were they recruited, why and where?**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Specific kinds of information are required for realist evaluations. Data are used to develop and refine theory about how, for whom, and in what circumstances programs generate their outcomes. This implies that any process used to recruit individuals needs to find those who are able to provide information about contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, and that the sample needs to be structured appropriately to test the program theory. Describing the recruitment process enables judgements to be made about whether the process used is likely to recruit individuals who were likely to have the information needed to test the program theory.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 12: Data gathering approaches

**Item 12: Data gathering approaches**

**Describe and justify the data gathering approaches used and how they were used to test programme theory.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Because of the nature of realist evaluation, a broad range of data may be required and a range of approaches may be necessary to collect it. Commonly, realist evaluations use more than one data gathering approach to gather data about contexts, mechanisms and outcomes and the relationships between them. Data collection tools and processes may need to be adapted to suit realist evaluation. The specific techniques used (e.g. realist interviewing) or adaptations made should be described in detail. Judgements can then be made on whether the approaches chosen, instruments used and adaptations made are capable of capturing the necessary data, in formats suitable for realist analysis.

For example, if interviews are used, the nature of the data collected must change from accessing respondents' interpretations of events, or 'meanings' (as is often done in constructivist approaches) to identifying causal processes (i.e. mechanisms) or relevant elements of context – which may or may not have anything to do with respondents' interpretations.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 13: Data documentation

**Item 13: Data documentation**

**State and explain the rationale underlying the processes used to document the data collected in the evaluation.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

It is important that it is possible to judge if the processes used to document the data used in a realist evaluation are rational and applied consistently. For example, a realist evaluation might report that all data from interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim and numerical data were entered into a spreadsheet, or collected using particular software.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:



Item 14: Data analysis

**Item 14: Data analysis**

**Describe in detail the analysis processes for all the data gathered. This section should include information on the constructs that are analysed, describe the analytic process, explain how the programme theory was developed, tested and refined and document and justify any changes in this process as the evaluation unfolded.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

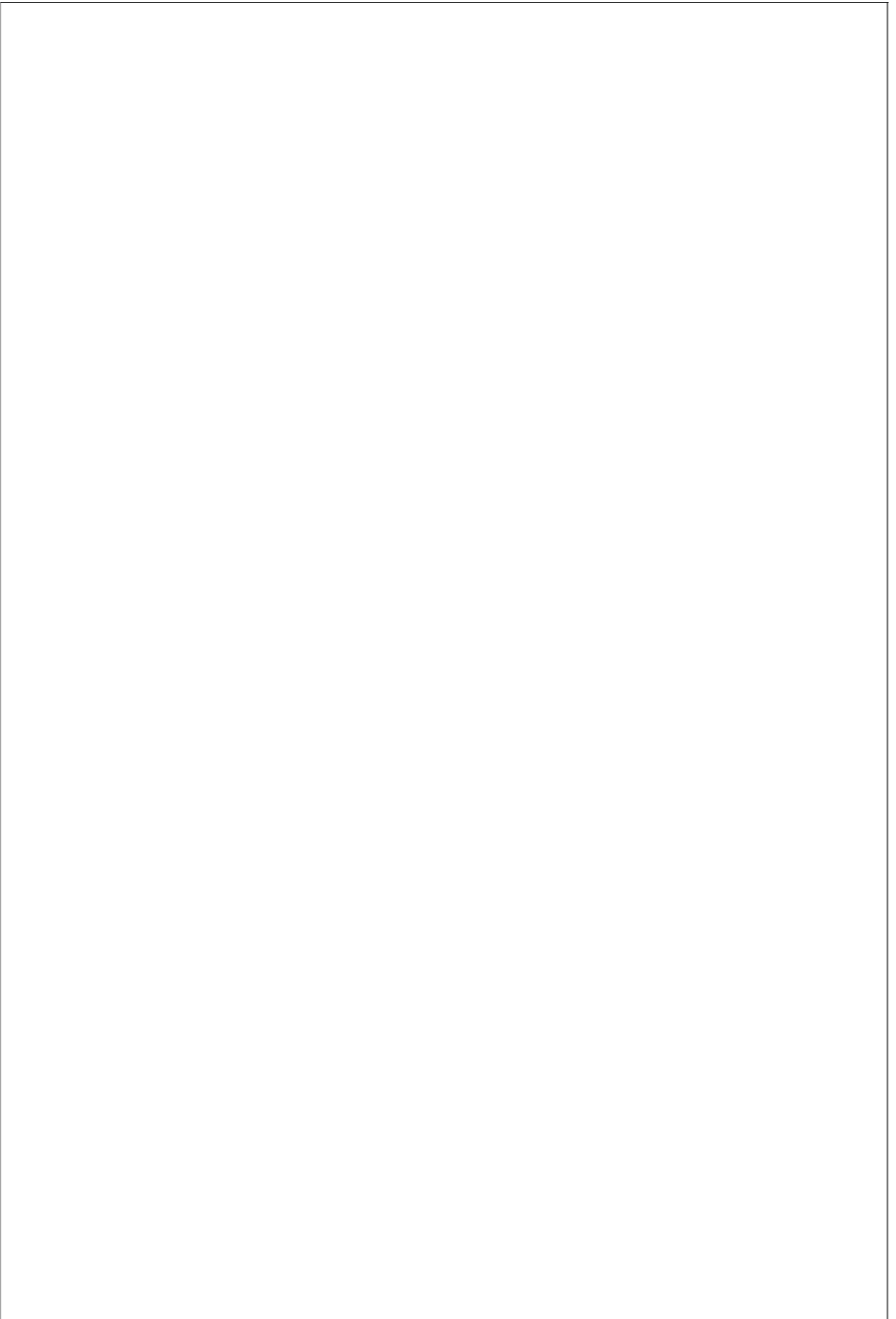
In a realist evaluation, the analysis process occurs iteratively. Realist evaluation is usually multi-method or mixed-method. The strategies used to analyse each method of data collection and integrate them should be explained. How these data are then used to develop, test and refine programme theory should also be explained. For example, if interviews were used, how were the interviews analysed? If a survey was also conducted, how was the survey analysed? In addition, how were these two sets of data integrated? The data analyses and may be sequential or in parallel – i.e. one set of data may be analysed first and then another or they might be analysed at the same time.

Specifically, at the centre of any realist analysis is the application of a realist philosophical 'lens' to data. A realist analysis of data seeks to analyse data using realist concepts. Specifically, realism adheres to a *generative* explanation for causation – i.e. an outcome (O) of interest was generated by relevant mechanism(s) (M) which was triggered by, or could only operate in, context (C). Within or across the data sources, recurrent patterns of outcomes and their associated mechanisms and contexts (CMO configurations) are likely to occur.

During analysis, the data gathered is used to iteratively develop and refine any initial programme theory (or theories) into one or more realist programme theories for the whole programme or initiative. This purpose has implications for the type of data that needs to be gathered – i.e. the data that needs to be gathered must be capable of being used for programme theory development, testing and refinement. These data must not only contain information that enables the evaluators to make inferences about whether something in the data is a context, mechanism or outcome, but also about the relationships between the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. In other words the data gathered needs to contain information that enables evaluators to make inferences about the configuration of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (i.e. Context-Mechanism-Outcome configurations or CMOCs). Other data gathered may have other functions in that they may be used to corroborate, refine or refute the assignment of a conceptual label to data (e.g. 'in this aspect of the analysis, this element is functioning as context) or inferences made about relationships within a CMOC. Data gathered will also be required to make inferences (and later corroborate or refute) the relationships between CMOCs – i.e. the location and interactions between CMOCs within a programme theory.

Ideally a description should be provided on who played which functions in the evaluation overall and if the data analysis processes evolved as the evaluation took shape.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:



**Item 15: Processes used to ensure quality**

**Item 15: Processes used to ensure quality**

**State the processes used to ensure quality during the evaluation.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Evaluations require a range of processes over a number of stages. For the findings of an evaluation to be credible, it is important for the reader to know that: a) the appropriate processes were used in an evaluation and; b) these were applied as described.

Items 11 to 14 above outline the guidance on the reporting of methodological processes. This item provides guidance on the reporting of the processes used to ensure that the evaluation was conducted to a high standard. We acknowledge that there is no universally accepted 'quality' standard against which all evaluations should be conducted. Evaluators should design their evaluations to meet three types of standards: the standards set by a relevant Evaluation Society; the standards required for high quality in the particular design (high quality ethnographic evaluation has to do different things well than does high quality survey-based evaluation); and the standards required to ensure that the evaluation is realist.

The processes used to design and implement the evaluation, and to ensure that high quality is maintained throughout the process and (where necessary) across all members of the evaluation team should be reported here or included within the relevant items above.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

**Results section**

**The following questions cover potential Items for inclusion in the Results section of the RAMESES II reporting standards for realist evaluations.**

**Please click on the NEXT button below to proceed.**

Item 16: Characteristics of participants

**Item 16: Characteristics of participants**

**State the characteristics of the participants and describe the nature of the data they provided and how they contributed to programme theory testing.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

One important source of data in a realist evaluation comes from participants (e.g. clients, patients, service providers, policy makers and so on). To ensure transparency and to enable judgements about the probative value of the data provided, it is important that details are provided on who (anonymised if necessary) provided what type of data.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:



Explanation:

The defining feature of a realist evaluation is that it is explanatory rather than simply descriptive, and that the explanation is consistent with a realist philosophy of science. That is, the realist programme theory is used to explain how and why patterns of outcomes occur for different groups or in different contexts. In other words, any such explanation should also include a description and explanation of the behaviour of key mechanisms under different contexts in generating outcomes.

Mechanisms are contingent: they are causal processes that have a tendency to occur in a particular set of conditions, but which do not always occur (because the circumstances have to be right for any particular mechanism to operate, and because many mechanisms can operate concurrently, sometimes cancelling each other out, sometimes contributing in different ways to a particular outcome).

At the start or in the early stages of a realist evaluation, the programme theory may be very rough and sketchy and not necessarily realist in nature. A major focus of any realist evaluation is to use the data to gradually refine the programme theory – gradually turning it into a realist programme theory. Ideally, in realist evaluations, this process of gradual refinement should be explicitly reported.

The findings in a realist evaluation necessarily include inferences about the links between context, mechanism and outcome and the explanation that accounts for this links. The explanation may draw on formal theory or program theory, or may simply comprise inferences drawn by the evaluators on the basis of the data available. It is important that where inferences are made this is clearly articulated. It is also important to include as much detailed data as possible to show how these inferences were arrived at. These data provided may (for example) support inferences about a factor operating as a context within a particular Context-Mechanism-Outcome configuration (CMOC). The theories developed within a realist evaluation often have to be built up from multiple inferences made on data collected from different sources. Providing the details of how and why these inferences were made may require that (where possible) additional files are provided, either online or at request from the evaluation team.

When reporting findings it is worth remembering that programme theories are usually 'middle-range' – that is, specific enough to generate propositions that can be tested against data but sufficiently abstract to be applicable to other contexts or other programmes using the same underlying theories.

Where relevant, disagreements or challenges faced by the evaluators in making any inferences should be reported here.

Transparency of the evaluation processes can be demonstrated, for example, by including such things as a detailed worked example, verbatim quotes from primary sources, or an exploration of disconfirming data (i.e. findings which appeared to refute the programme theory but which, on closer analysis, could be explained by other contextual influences).

When reporting context-mechanism-outcome configurations, evaluators should be clearly label what they have categorised as context, what as mechanism and what as outcome within the configuration.

Multiple sources of data might be needed to support an evaluative conclusion. It is sometimes appropriate to build the argument for a conclusion as an unfolding narrative in which successive data sources increase the strength of the inferences made and the conclusions drawn.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

## RAMESES II Delphi - Round 2

### Discussion section

**The following questions cover potential Items for inclusion in the Discussion section of the RAMESES II reporting standards for realist evaluations.**

**Please click on the NEXT button below to proceed.**



Item 18: Summary of findings

**Item 18: Summary of findings**

**Summarise the main findings with attention to the evaluation questions, focus of the evaluation, and intended audience.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

In order to place the findings in the context of the wider literature and/or policy need, it is necessary to summarise briefly what has been found. This section should be succinct and balanced. Specifically for a realist evaluation, this section should summarise and explain the main findings and their relationships to the 'final' refined realist programme theory which emerged from the analysis. It should also highlight the strength of evidence for the main conclusions. This should be done with careful attention to the needs of the main users of the evaluation.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

**Item 19: Strengths, limitations and future research directions**

**Item 19: Strengths, limitations and future research directions**

**Discuss both the strengths of the evaluation and its limitations. These should include (but need not be limited to): [a] consideration of all the steps in the evaluation processes and; [b] comment on the adequacy and trustworthiness of the explanatory insights which emerged. In some evaluations, there may be an expectation to provide guidance on future research directions, programme implementation and/or programme design. The limitations identified may point to areas where further work is needed.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Specifically for a realist evaluation, the strengths and limitations in relation to realist methodology and analysis should be included. Realist evaluations may be constrained by time and resources, by the skill mix and collective experience of the evaluators and/or by anticipated or unanticipated challenges in gathering the data or the data itself. These should be made explicit so that readers can interpret the findings in the light of them. Limitations imposed by any modifications made to the evaluation processes should also be reported and justified.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 20: Comparison with existing literature

**Item 20: Comparison with existing literature**

**Where appropriate, compare and contrast the evaluation’s findings with the existing literature on the same policy, programmes or initiatives.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

Not all evaluations will be required to report on this item which is probably most relevant for peer-reviewed academic articles.

Comparing and contrasting the findings from an evaluation with the existing literature may help readers to put the findings into context. For example, this item might cover questions such as; how does this evaluation design compare to others (e.g. were they theory-driven?); what does this evaluation add, and which body of work in particular does it add to?; has this evaluation reached the same or different conclusion to previous evaluations?; and has it answered a question previously identified as important by leaders in the field?

Referring back to previous literature can be of great value in realist evaluations. Realist evaluations develop and refine realist programme theory (or theories) to explain observed outcome patterns. The focus on how mechanisms work (or don't) in different contexts potentially enables cumulative knowledge to be developed around families of policies and programmes or across initiatives in different sectors that rely on the same underlying mechanisms. Consequently, reporting for this item should focus on comparing and contrasting the behaviour of key mechanisms under different contexts.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 21: Conclusion and recommendations

**Item 21: Conclusion and recommendations**

**List the main implications that are justified by the data. If appropriate, offer recommendations.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

A clear line of reasoning is needed to link the implications drawn from the findings with the findings themselves, as presented in the results section. If the evaluation is small or preliminary, or if the strength of evidence behind the inferences is weak, firm implications for practice and policy may be inappropriate.

If recommendations are given, these should be consistent with a realist approach. In particular, if recommendations are based on programme outcome(s), the recommendations themselves should take account of context. For example, if an evaluation found that a program worked for some people or in some contexts (as would be expected in a realist evaluation), it would be inappropriate to recommend that it be run everywhere for everyone. Similarly, recommendations for program improvement should be consistent with findings about how the program has been found to work (or not) – for example, to support the features of implementation that fire 'positive mechanisms' in particular contexts, or to redress features that prevent intended mechanisms from firing.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order:

Item 22: Funding

**Item 22: Funding**

**Details should be provided for the funding source (if any) for the evaluation, the role played by the funder (if any) and any conflicts of interests of the evaluators.**

\* Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content - (Item wording)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Explanation:

The source of funding for an evaluation and/or personal conflicts of interests may influence the evaluation questions, methods, data analysis, conclusions and/or recommendations. No evaluation is a 'view from nowhere', and readers will be better able to interpret the evaluation if they know why it was done and for which commissioner.

If an evaluation is published, the process for reporting funding and conflicts of interest as set out by the publication concerned should be followed.

Optional - Please comment on item, including wording and/or item order: